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ABSTRACT

This study examined Georgia middle school teachers' perceptions of their work environment, their perceived efficacy, and organizational commitment. The study included 400 full-time, certified teachers from 40 rural and metropolitan middle schools. Teachers completed a mailed survey that asked about demographics, organizational commitment, perceived efficacy, and the school work culture. Focus groups in two of the schools had teachers discuss variables from the mailed survey to examine possible relationships between all variables in question. A total of 275 teachers responded to the mailed survey. Data analysis indicated that on the surface, school culture was measured through the dimensions of planning, staff development, program development, and assessment of productivity. However, the underlying core assumptions of school culture suggested the interrelated nature of important process and structure variables. Processes included: collaboration; participatory decision making; and supportive administrative leadership. Structures included: encouragement of innovation and risk taking; school goals and planning; and staff development to further goals. The analysis suggested that organizational structure and process variables are positively related to important teacher beliefs such as personal efficacy and organizational commitment. Focus groups supported the quantitative findings. (Contains 1 table and 67 references.) (SM)

Running Head: TEACHER EFFICACY AND COMMITMENT

Teacher Efficacy and Commitment: Relationships to Middle School Culture

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Abstract

The researchers believed that significant relationships existed between school work culture process and structure variables and teacher beliefs of efficacy and commitment. Research questions were addressed using a four part instrument designed to measure perceptions of school work culture, organizational commitment, and teacher efficacy. 275 middle school teachers in Georgia constituted the sample. The response rate of the mailed questionnaire was 70%. One significant root, with a redundancy index of 8%, was detected from the canonical analysis. School work culture structure and process variables contributed equally to the predictor variate while organizational commitment and personal teacher efficacy contributed to the criterion variate. Focus group results supported the quantitative findings.

Teacher Efficacy and Commitment: Relationships to Middle School Culture

In recent years, school culture, has become a topic of concern because of its unique and complicated association with a vast array of change, improvement, and reform efforts aimed at increasing school productivity (Boyd, 1992; Sarason, 1990). In research, school culture is being defined as: "the cohesion that bonds the school," and as something that can promote "lasting fundamental change (e.g. changes in teaching practices or the decision making structure)" (Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986, p.98). This focus on cultural context connotates a holistic, open systems interpretation of school structures and processes which influence decisions made by teachers and administrators.

Research is just beginning to consider how school cultural contexts affect teacher beliefs and attitudes. Rosenholtz, (1989; 1992) concluded that teachers conform their beliefs and behaviors according to their school workplace. Teachers define themselves and their work roles according to the school's underlying assumptions and those assumptions are witnessed in the structures and processes of the school. Through a type of mutual exchange, teacher beliefs and behaviors, coupled with school culture can reinforce or change what a school achieves.

Research informs us that organizational structures and work patterns of the most successful school organizations are distinguishable from their less successful counterparts. Surrounded by a general tendency towards "openness," these successful schools appear to have some commonalties in their core assumptions. First, their leaders and members share and participate in management decisions. Second, they appear focused on structures and processes that make their school operate well. Third, the people within the school believe that the power of the group in achieving goals in a more powerful tool than the power of the individual. Fourth,

they see the environment outside their boundaries as one of partnership, and abundant with additional resources for their school. Hence, their cultures appear to be distinctively different from less successful schools because of their open relationship with the environment and the interrelated nature of its structures and processes (Patterson, 1992; Prince, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989; 1992; Patterson, Purkey & Parker, 1986).

Similar to the cultural view of successful schools described above, is, The Managing Productive Schools Model (Snyder and Anderson, 1986), which is theoretically based upon viewing schools as open social systems. Working together, in collaborative settings, to reach common goals is a core assumption of the organization in this model. Other important beliefs for schools in this model would be collective purpose, team decision making, collaboration, continuous improvement, "risk taking", and viewing the school as a learning organization (Snyder and Anderson, 1986; Snyder and Snyder, 1996; and Krajewski and Snyder, 1996).

With the Managing Productive Schools Model, school work culture is quantitatively operationalized through The School Work Culture Profile. Thus, school work culture is considered a "subset" and as representative of the "work patterns" of the larger school culture (Johnson, Snyder, Anderson, & Johnson, 1993, p. 1). Through the dimensions of organizational planning, staff development, program development, and school assessment, The School Work Culture Profile attempts to broach the integrated nature of structures and processes in the teacher's workplace.

In the present study, a teacher's sense of efficacy and organizational commitment were the beliefs theorized to be influenced by the structures and processes of school culture. Teacher efficacy represents a person's convictions about their own abilities and the abilities of the teaching

profession to help make a difference in students' lives (Ashton and Webb, 1986; Dembo & Gibson, 1985) and was operationalized with the Gibson and Dembo (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale. Teacher organizational commitment involves the strength of one's identification and involvement with school goals and values and also represents a teacher conviction. It was operationalized using the Teacher Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

The focus of this study was on middle school teacher perceptions of their work environment and their perceived efficacy and organizational commitment. Most studies treat this group as extensions of elementary or high school and rarely can conclusions about the relationship between organizational facets and teacher efficacy or teacher organizational commitment be stated about middle schools as distinct school organizations. Some have suggested the relationship between teacher beliefs and middle school organizations (Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss, and Hoy, 1994; Reyes and Fuller, 1995). Others have noted the unique needs of the 10 to 15 year old adolescents middle schools serve and the necessity to provide environments which will encourage student development. Interdisciplinary team teaching, team planning, being focused on school goals, viewing the school as a community of learners are a few of the structures and processes suggested to accomplish this end (Carnegie Council, 1989).

It was hypothesized that there would be a relationship between the school work culture indices of organizational planning, staff development, program development, and assessing school productivity and their perceptions of efficacy and organizational commitment. Furthermore, it was theorized that the relationship would be positive and would therefore indicate structures and processes in schools can impact teacher beliefs.

School Culture

School culture has been described as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems...valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel" (Schein, 1985, p. 12) and as the "story" that develops over time (Senge et al. 1994, p. 21). It is a fairly recent phenomenon with one of the earliest models of organizations as cultures being developed by Schein (1985). In part, the study of school culture grew from advances in organizational theory but it can also be related to research concerning the vast effective schools movement of the 1960's and 1970's. Contributors to the study of organizational culture and specifically to the culture of schools concluded that school culture can enhance improvement efforts or be a barrier to change, can effect teacher productivity and student achievement (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1982; 1985; and Smey-Richman, 1991).

It was suggested by some that internal structures and processes of the school culture could make some schools more effective than others (Good & Brophy, 1986; Sashkin and Huddle, 1986 and Wayson, 1986). Collegiality, collaboration, shared decision making, continuous improvement of teaching practices, and long term commitment are ways to measure the strength of a schools culture (Little and Bird, 1984; Pfeifer and Baker, 1986; and Porter and Brophy, 1988).

Pointing to shared beliefs and values as paramount, Sashkin and Huddle (1986), concluded that the school's culture that identifies goals, determines if changes will be made and what changes will be made. Furthermore, it is the school's internal structures which will collegial relations. Cooperative relationships among the staff and extensive staff development based on goals and needs of the school will be based on faculty creativity and commitment. Personnel in

schools with strong cultures know what they are doing and know how to assess their progress. They have structures which will support group decision making and problem solving.

As mentioned earlier, Managing Productive Schools Model and The School Work Culture Profile emphasizes "the social and psychological integration of the skills, beliefs, and performance patterns of a given school at a given time" (Snyder and Anderson, 1986; p. 1). Findings from their research concerning productive school work cultures appear to have distinct structural and process variables. Structural variables include: dependence on work groups to operate the school and encourage innovation, heavy emphasis on school-wide goals and school-wide planning, staff development which is characterized as ongoing and purposely related to school goals, and the view of the school as a community of learners. Process variables include: extensive collaboration among participants, feedback from colleagues and administrators that is supportive and developmental, and participatory decision-making.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as the "relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Steers, 1977, p.46. It is characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to remain with the organization (Steers & Porter, 1979). The definition of organizational commitment, used here, is defined in terms of an attitude, (the belief in and acceptance of the organization), and behavior, (a willingness to exert effort and desire to remain in the organization). It goes further than "passive loyalty to the organization" (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, p. 224).

Some have suggested connections between organizational commitment and school structures and processes similar to those in the present study. For example, Hoy and Ferguson (1985) found strong positive relationships between teacher organizational commitment and staff cohesiveness and attitudes toward innovation. Healthy school climate and in particular, the role of the principal was significantly related to teachers sense of organizational commitment. Principals who are constructive, who are achievement oriented, and who demonstrate friendly, open, and collegial behavior towards their faculty, have more committed teachers (Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1989).

In fact, others have reported similar findings between teacher organizational commitment and the importance of the principals role, their leadership styles, and the structures and processes present used in daily operations of the school (Coldarci, 1992; Hart and Willower, 1994). Other research suggests specific structures and processes are related to teacher organizational commitment. Teacher decision making power (Kushman, 1992); collaborative climate (Hoy et al., 1990; Reyes, 1992), shared beliefs, values, and norms (Shaw & Reyes, 1990; Reyes & Fuller, 1995) may influence this variable.

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy, or the teacher's belief about their "ability to have a positive effect on student learning," consists of two independent dimensions. Dimension one, sense of teaching efficacy, relates to how much teaching can influence student learning. Dimension two, sense of personal teaching efficacy, concerns the individual's estimate of their own teaching competency.

Psychological perspectives of teacher efficacy, such as the one used in this study, began with Rotter's social learning theory (1966). Rotter theorized that a person's behavior can be

predicted by values, specific situations, and expectations. Of importance here, the person's expectancy is shaped over time by behavioral reinforcements and is contingent upon the person's perception of internal versus external locus of control. Locus of control concerns whether outcomes or events are internally or externally controlled.

Advancements to the psychological perspective were made by Lefcourt (1976). Internal control oriented people are more attuned and more willing to respond to environmental changes, are more likely to try to improve their environmental conditions, and are more willing to gather and use information because it is seen as useful for a future outcome than external locus of control individuals.

Bandura (1986) considered expectancy to be dual constructs: personal efficacy and outcome expectancy. Personal efficacy is a belief about one's own capabilities to perform while outcome expectations are pre-determined judgments that a person makes concerning the likely consequence of a future action. He concluded that these two expectancies are actually two different continuums that are interrelated, situational, and affect motivation and future learning. While knowledge, skills, and outcome expectancies are important, they are not sufficient for individual performance. One's expectancies regarding their own capabilities to perform are necessary for attainment of some outcomes.

The Rand Change Agent Studies (1974-1978), using Rotter's expectancy theory, developed an efficacy instrument designed to demonstrate the internal-external locus of control continuum. Teacher efficacy was measured by computing a total efficacy score to the following two items: "When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment", and "If I try

really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students" (Ross, 1994a, p. 4).

Using this early measure of teacher efficacy, Armor, et. al., (1976) found the greater the teacher's sense of efficacy, the more their students advanced in reading achievement. Berman, et. al., (1977) found a teachers' sense of efficacy was positively related to the percentage of project goals achieved, amount of teacher change, continuation of both project materials and methods, and improved student performance.

Ashton and Webb (1982), and the Gibson and Dembo (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale using Bandura's social learning theory and self-efficacy concept, developed two-dimensional models of teacher efficacy. Gibson's and Dembo's (1984) research resulted in a nine item personal and a seven item general teaching efficacy instrument. The first factor was described as representing "a teacher's sense of personal teaching efficacy, or belief that one has the skills and abilities to bring about student learning" (p. 573). Conceptually, this item reflected Bandura's self-efficacy concept. The second factor was interpreted as "a teacher's sense of teaching efficacy, or belief that any teacher's ability to bring about change is significantly limited by factors external to the teacher" (p. 574). This "general teaching efficacy" factor was believed to represent the "general relationship between teaching and learning" and "clearly corresponds to Bandura's outcome expectancy dimension" (p. 574).

Since the initial study by Gibson and Dembo (1984) some patterns have begun to emerge concerning teacher efficacy and its relationship to teacher work culture structure and process variables. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) using the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) found certain instrumental needs (task and goal oriented) and expressive needs (relationships) to be

related to personal and general teaching efficacy. Important conclusions from this study suggest that it is appropriate to study efficacy from the two dimensional aspect. Furthermore, while the two efficacious are related, they seemed to be connected to different types of teacher needs. For example, personal efficacy appears to have a significant and positive relationship to academically oriented teaching environment, and to the principals influence on superiors (instrumental needs). General teaching efficacy appeared to be related to morale (expressive need) and to institutional integrity (instrumental need).

Teacher collaboration, a critical process variable of productive school cultures, may have an effect on teacher efficacy (Rosenholtz, 1989; 1992). Using the Gibson and Dembo Teacher Efficacy Scale, Ross (1992) found that teachers who interacted with peer coaches from their own schools and with expert teachers from other schools, had higher general teaching efficacy. Others have supported this finding. Higher general efficacy was associated with higher implementation of curriculum guidelines when there was collaboration with other teachers (Poole and Okeafor, 1989) but with personal teaching efficacy collaboration over implementation guidelines changed the relationship. For teachers with existing high personal efficacy, there was higher implementation when there was less collaboration. Low personal efficacy teachers responded with higher implementation when there was more collaboration. Collaboration then appeared to be a necessary factor for teachers who questioned their own abilities (Poole, Okeafor and Sloan, 1989).

Productive school work culture indices, such as in-services, can impact teacher efficacy. Ross (1994b) measured teacher efficacy on three occasions during a six month long cooperative learning in-service. Using the Gibson and Dembo Teacher Efficacy Scale, the researcher found

that those who were the most persistent in implementing cooperative learning showed higher increases in general teaching efficacy. Bolinger (1988), in an in-service based on the Madeline Hunter model, found that personal teaching efficacy increased because the training program provided teaching skills that teachers perceived as increasing their instructional performance.

In closing, teacher efficacy has been linked to organizational commitment (Reyes, 1992). Teacher motivation to learn, teacher efficacy, social interaction, sense of control, involvement with students, and locus of control are associated with variability in teacher organizational commitment. Overall, these variables explained 45% of the variance in teacher commitment. Coldarci's (1992) psychological commitment to teaching scale was quite different from the one used in the present study, but it does support the idea that teacher efficacy, both general and personal, are related to teacher commitments. In this study, personal and general efficacy, were the strongest predictors of commitment.

Method

Sample

Georgia middle schools (6-8 or 7-8) and randomly selected teachers in those schools were the population for this study. A sample of 40 middle schools, representing approximately 13% of Georgia middle schools, were randomly selected for the study. Of these 40 schools, 20 were from rural Georgia while 20 were from metropolitan statistical areas. Ten, full time, certified teachers from each school were randomly selected bringing the total number of respondents to 400. The teacher demographic variables: gender, teaching experience, certification level, and certification area were submitted to Chi Square analysis. The sample appeared to represent Georgia's middle school teacher population.

Data collection

Data was collected from teachers using a mailed survey. By mailing the survey, the researcher was able to gather information concerning teacher and school demographics, and since the unit of analysis was individual teachers, the mailed survey allowed respondents time to consider their responses. A current list of full-time faculty was obtained from the principal of the schools upon their agreement to participate in the project. The document arrived in a high quality envelope with the respondent's name hand-printed on the front so as to avoid being mistaken for junk mail. Inside the envelope was a notebook, which housed the instrument, and a pen for the respondent's use. A short vita about the researcher, a self-addressed, stamped, return envelope, and a personal letter addressed to the respondent explaining the nature of the project was also included in the packet. Responses from 275 surveys were returned, giving an overall response rate of 70%.

Instruments

A four part questionnaire was mailed to each of the participating teachers. Part One consisted of 6 items designed on a Likert scale response code. Information concerning teacher demographics was gathered.

Part II of the questionnaire, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), was developed by Porter et. al, (1974). The instrument measures three aspects of the organization: acceptance of organizational values and goals, a willingness to exert extra effort for the organization, and a desire to remain with the organization. These were combined into a single commitment scale. The instrument consists of 15 items which are scored on a Likert format from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Several items from the instrument are as follows:

1. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this school be successful.

2. I find that my values and the school's values are very similar.

Cronbach's alphas for the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) are consistently high, .82 to .93 with public employees, classified university employees, hospital employees, scientists and engineers, auto company managers, retail management trainees and psychiatric technicians. Reliability coefficients for studies involving teachers range from .79 to .90 (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Reyes, 1989; Reyes, 1990; and Reyes, 1992) and are similar to those reported for other industries.

The Gibson and Dembo (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale is a fifteen item instrument that measures the two aspects of teacher efficacy. Using a Likert scale format, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, teachers indicate their perception of general teacher efficacy and personal teacher efficacy. Sample items for the two dimensions of teacher efficacy are as follows:

Personal teaching efficacy:

If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept.

General teacher efficacy:

If parents would do more with their children, I could do more.

Gibson and Dembo (1984), using principal factor analysis, extracted two factors similar to Bandura's two theoretical constructs of self-efficacy. The sixteen items chosen for the efficacy scale ranged from .45 to .65. Reliability of the teacher efficacy scale had Cronbach's alpha levels of .78 for personal teaching efficacy; .75 for general teaching efficacy; and .79 for the total

teaching efficacy scale. In the present study, Cronbach's alphas were .82 for personal and .62 for general efficacy.

The School Work Culture Profile (Snyder; 1988) was used to measure individual faculty members perceptions about work patterns within their particular school organization. The instrument, uses a Likert format from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and has four subscales Several items for each scale are provided below:

Organizational Planning:

1. Data about student achievement, school services and programs are analyzed by the professional staff to aid in identifying school development goals.
2. Professional staff members are assigned to work in teams.

Staff Development:

1. Staff members share their ideas and concerns for improving work productivity in their work group.
2. Staff development programs provide opportunities to learn new knowledge.

Program Development:

1. Instructional programs are planned cooperatively by the professional staff.
2. Community resources are used in the school's instructional programs.

School-wide Assessment:

1. Work groups (committees, department teams, grade level groups, etc.) are assessed on their contribution to the achievement of school goals.
2. Staff members provide constructive feedback to each other regularly (Snyder and Parkinson, 1988)

Reliability reported for the subscales ranges from .76 to .93 with a total scale score of .97 (Parkinson, 1990). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for each subscale was as follows: .89 organizational planning, .89; staff development, .91; program development, .85 ; and school-wide assessment, .90.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a data collection procedure which allows researchers to collect very narrow, purposeful information concerning the perceptions, feelings, and ways of thinking of the participants. Hence, focus groups give qualitative data which provides the researcher with different types of insights that does qualitative data. Focus groups are a special type of group, composed of 7-10 participants who are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of interest (Krueger, 1994).

Focus groups were conducted in two of the participating middle schools. Participants included teachers who were used as respondents of the mailed questionnaire. Questions used during the focus groups session were phrased to have teachers describe the variables used in the study, to explore the possible relationship between all variables in question, and to provide through the use of "teacher voices," a possible consensus view of the study. Copies of the questions were mailed to the participants prior to the meeting. It was hoped that this would allow the respondents time to consider their answers. In one school, seven faculty members were present while in the second middle school, six teachers were present.

Categories were established for the criterion and predictor variables. Teacher statements were arranged under the category deemed most appropriate. Reliability was addressed by having a neutral party participate in a multiple check. Both the variable categories and the

appropriateness of the teacher response codings were examined. This was done to assure the researcher's neutrality (Patton, 1990).

Results

Canonical Correlation Analysis

The design of this study involved examining a set of criterion (dependent) variables by a set of predictor (independent) variables. In this case, the dependent variables were teacher efficacy, a two dimensional construct: personal efficacy and general teacher efficacy and a one dimensional construct: teacher organizational commitment. The set of independent variables included school work culture indices of: organizational planning, developing staff, developing program, and assessing school productivity.

Because primary interest concerned interrelationships among sets of multiple dependent and independent variables, canonical analysis was chosen. Through canonical analysis, the set of dependent variables blend to form a variate which best represents the importance of the original dependent variables. The same process occurs for the set of independent variables. The resulting pair of variates are then interpreted by the strength of their relationship (a canonical correlation), the ability of the predictor variate to explain variance in each of the criterion variables (a redundancy index), and the size i.e. magnitude of the canonical correlations.

Only one significant root was detected in the canonical analysis of teacher perceptions of commitment and efficacy with school work culture. Magnitude of the eigenvalue was .26. The canonical correlation observed was .45, and the Wilk's' Lambda was .79 ($p = .000$) [Table 1].

In examining the structure coefficients of the first canonical root, organizational commitment had the highest coefficient (.897) while the second highest canonical structure

coefficient was personal efficacy (.434). General teaching efficacy was low (-.258). The predictor variables of planning (.963), program development (.958), staff development (.854), and assessment (.828) were significant contributors to the predictor variate.

The inspection of structure coefficients led to the observation that schools which have high levels of school work culture practices of planning, program development, staff development, and assessment tend to show high levels of organizational commitment and low levels of personal efficacy. The redundancy index (7.27) indicated the predictor canonical variate of school work culture and criterion variate, organizational commitment and personal teaching efficacy, shared 7.27% of the variance. In general, the results of this study support the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of their school work culture and their organizational commitment and personal teaching efficacy. Because only a small proportion of variance (7.9%) could be accounted for by the four school work indices, the results should be considered with caution.

The canonical root for middle schools appeared to be a predictor of teachers organizational commitment and of their personal teaching efficacy but not general teaching efficacy. Being high on The School Work Culture Profile indices of planning, staff development, assessment of school productivity, and program development were significant predictors of a teacher's organizational commitment and of their personal teaching efficacy. Based on these conclusions the hypothesis that there would be a positive relationship between the school work culture indices of organizational planning, staff development, program development, and assessing school productivity and their perceptions of efficacy and organizational commitment was partially supported. General teacher efficacy did not appear to be part of the mode.

Focus Groups Analysis

The most striking similarities between both schools concerned the predictor variables. Consensus in both schools was reached in relation to the importance of the school work culture indices. In both schools, the teachers preferred not to rank them but to consider them all as equally important measures in assessing their school environment. As one teacher expressed, "they go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other and have a picture of the school. They go together." As another stated, "There's no question that how we work together and the goals we set are important for everybody here."

Teachers from both schools were also similar on how they ranked the importance of the criterion variables in terms of their relationship to the four school work culture indices. By far, organizational commitment was more closely related to school work culture. Personal teacher efficacy was the second most important and general teacher efficacy was ranked third. Not only was general teacher efficacy ranked third, but in both schools no serious relationship between this efficacy variable and organizational commitment or school work culture indices was noted.

Teachers saw little direct connection concerning their beliefs about the teaching profession's ability to make a difference in students' lives (general teaching efficacy) and their particular teaching abilities (personal teaching efficacy), their level of organizational commitment, or their particular school work culture practices. General teaching efficacy appeared to be more closely associated with political ideas outside their particular school i.e. the world beyond their control. It was separate, and unattached to their daily work world. Teachers spoke of the president's initiatives, the local community tax dollars and how this supports public education, and how state lottery money has improved public education. One teacher stated, "You know the

media is not our friend. It seems like they put more bad news than good news on television and in the newspaper. They hurt our group more than they help us."

Focus group members at both schools ranked organizational commitment as the most important in relation to school work culture. Several teachers spoke of their relationships with faculty members as being an indicator of commitment. Others spoke of their relationships with the children as an indicator of commitment. "It's important for the children to see us at school, at school events, and out in the community. We need to be role models for the students." Organizational commitment, among other things, is connected to relationships

Concerning personal teacher efficacy, organizational commitment, and these variables relationship to school work culture, teachers indicated school structures and processes could enhance organizational commitment and personal efficacy but not totally conclude it. "Resources help good teaching and they help your level of commitment but they don't determine it. That comes from within." As one older, veteran teacher put it, "I'm a good teacher because I have worked hard to be that. I was a good teacher when we had to supply our own paper. I'm older now, much wiser, the school gives me many more things to use, but I'm still a good teacher because I want to be." These were interpreted as indications that teachers may be experiencing a relationship between structures and processes within the work place which enhance commitment to the organization and personal efficacy. At the same time, both personal teaching efficacy and organizational commitment appeared to be internal and something within the individual's control.

In conclusion, it appeared to be important to analyze teacher perceptions of efficacy and organizational commitment not only in quantitative terms but also in the qualitative "teacher worlds". Teachers interpret general efficacy as something associated with the world outside their

particular schools. It appeared to have little to do with their personal teaching abilities or their commitment to the school organization. While school culture indices appeared to be positively related to organizational commitment and personal efficacy, commitment seemed to be more directly related. Focus group results added an additional dimension to the study.

Discussion

On the surface, school culture was measured through the dimensions of planning, staff development, program development, and assessment of productivity. But the underlying core assumptions of school culture suggested the interrelated nature of important process and structure variables. Processes included collaboration, participatory decision making, and supportive administrative leadership. Structures included encouragement of innovation and risk-taking, school goals and planning, and staff development to further goals.

The significant root derived from the canonical analysis suggested that organizational structure and process variables are positively related to important teacher beliefs i.e. personal efficacy and organizational commitment. Specifically, process variables such as collaborative faculty relationships, participatory decision making, and supportive administrative leadership can make a difference in how teachers' identify with school goals, the amount of effort they are willing to expend, and if they wish to continue association with the school. Those same structures and processes can also influence a teacher's perceptions of their own ability to make a difference in students' lives. These findings are consistent with much of the related literature.

Collaboration was seen as having a direct and significant effect on teacher efficacy and organizational commitment (Hoy, et. al, 1989; 1990; Newman, Rutter & Smith, 1989; Reyes, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1989; and Ross, 1992). When decision making is participatory for teachers,

teacher commitment and efficacy are enhanced (Rosenholtz, 1989). Administrative leadership becomes an important process variable for teacher commitment when it is perceived as supportive, rather than controlling (Hoy, Tarter & Bliss, 1989), and for increasing teacher efficacy (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; & Newman, Rutter & Smith, 1989).

Apparently, results from this research also indicated that structures such as encouragement of innovation and "risk taking", school goals and planning, staff development and in-services, and viewing the school as a "community of learners" were important to teachers' organizational commitment and sense of personal efficacy. These results were also supported by much of the literature. Learning opportunities enhanced teacher commitment (Hoy & Ferguson, 1985; Rosenholtz, 1989), and was one of the most powerful work culture variables in relation to teacher efficacy (Newman, Rutter, & Smith, 1989). Staff development and in-service opportunities tend to increase teacher efficacy (Bolinger, 1988; Ohmart, 1992; and Ross, 1994b). Teachers with higher organizational commitment were inclined to stress organizational goals and the work groups necessary to achieve them (Reyes and Pounder, 1990).

General efficacy was not a significant factor in the analysis. While it seems important for teachers to have faith in the teaching profession's ability to make a difference in students' lives, it does not appear to enter into the equation when school structures and processes were considered. some researchers suggest general teacher efficacy can operate independently, or jointly, with personal efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986) or that it is an index of conservative or liberal orientation towards education (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Some have noted the general tendency of teachers to "answer in the middle" on this dimension (D. Sabo, personal communication,

September, 1994). In any respect, general efficacy is different from personal teacher efficacy and should be treated as such.

School administrators and teachers, as well as the preparation programs they attend, should consider the importance of school culture, and the vast, theoretical body of "systems thinking" which has helped define schools in this vein. Furthermore, school culture needs to be addressed because of its influence on teacher beliefs. Staff development, school goals, and encouraging innovation should become integral structures in schools. So should the processes which support them i.e. supportive administrative leadership, collaboration, and participatory decision making. The importance of "systems thinking" offers great promise for processes and structures which could help shape, improve, or transform school cultures into productive entities and would be a good starting point for many schools.

In many school improvement plans, teachers are expected to take active, and very significant roles in the development and implementation of the school's efforts. Teacher leadership is critical to these plans. Part of the success of the improvement efforts may depend on important teacher convictions such as commitment to the organization and their efficacy beliefs. Teacher and administrative leadership should pay particular attention to their school culture and how it effects teacher leadership development. More than likely, future teachers must be leaders in a multitude of ways. They will have to be more than instructional leaders. Undergraduate and graduate programs should also be conscious of this as they try to improve their programs or they plan experiences for their students. They too, should pay particular attention to their culture, for it is within this culture that school administrators and teachers will receive many of their theoretical and practical experiences.

Finally, it has been suggested through the literature and this study that successful schools have core assumptions which determine the school's achievements and make some schools better than others (Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986). As Rosenholtz (1989) suggested, important teacher beliefs and convictions act in a mutual relationship with school culture. These, working together, can reinforce or change what a school is able to achieve. Those achievements can be expressed in many meaningful ways. A more committed teacher, a more efficacious teacher, a more educated child, and a staff that realizes the influence of ngative student demographic variables can be lessened or negated by a school's cultural processes and structures, are only a fe of the positive outcomes. Hopefully, this study provided additional understanding of how organizational structures and processes within a school's culture can influence important teacher beliefs. Additional research will add to our understanding and enable educational leaders to create environments which support teachers and students, and the broader educational community.

Table 1

Summary of Canonical Root for Organizational Commitment and Efficacy Convictions of Georgia Middle School Teachers

Variable	Raw Weight	Standardized Weight	Structure Coefficient	Adequacy Index	Redundancy Index
	Teacher Commitment and Efficacy				
Organizational Commitment	1.984	.854	.897		
Personal Efficacy	.493	.364	.434		
Teaching Efficacy	-.368	-.295	-.258		
				35.312	7.279
	School Work Culture Dimensions				
Planning	1.153	.737	.963		
Program	1.006	.578	.958		
Staff Development	-.257	-.177	.854		
Assessment	-.208	-.135	.828		
				16.79	81.46

Eigenvalue = .26	Canonical Correlation = .45	Squared Cannonical Correlation = .21
Wilks' Lambda = .79	F 12, 709 = 5.61	Significance of F = .000

Note: Results reported for the 1st canonical root only. The second and third roots were not significant.

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